SEMAPHORE SIGNAL

ISSUE 21

The publication for Macintosh™ users and developers.

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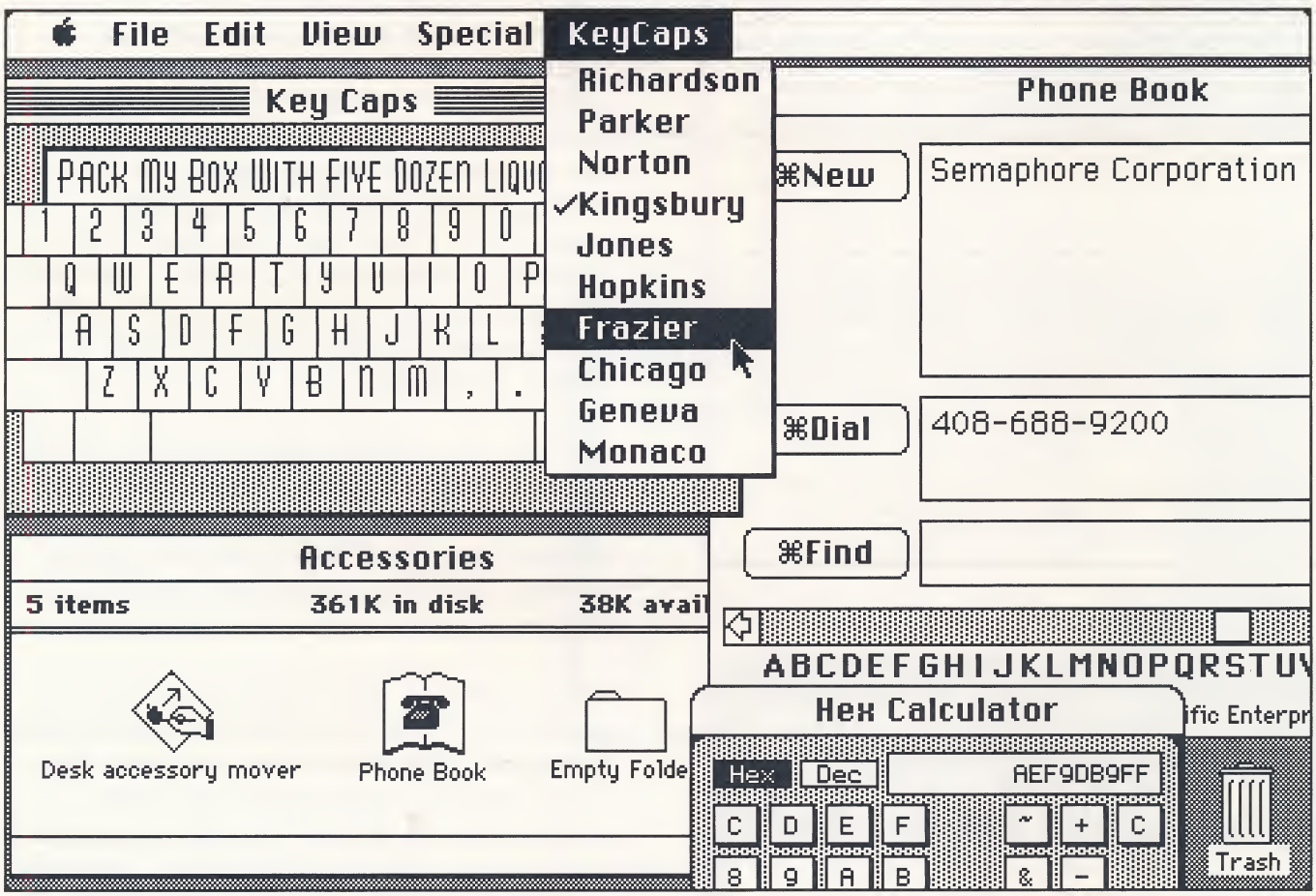
18 February 1985



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Should You Move Up To ThinkTank 512?

by Ran Talbott

If you have bought or are going to buy the ThinkTank outline processor, you may be wondering if you should pop the extra hundred bucks for the enhanced version called ThinkTank 512 (for the 512K Macintosh, from Living Videotext Inc., 2432 Charleston Road, Mountain View, CA 94043, 415-964-6300).

Topping the list of new ThinkTank 512 features is the ability to add text and graphics to an outline. ThinkTank does this using windows, just like the larger window that contains the outline itself. Double-clicking on the + or - at the beginning of an outline entry opens up a window, or closes one if it's open. The cursor changes from an arrow to a circle to show when double-clicking to open or close a window is enabled.

You can add a window at any level in the outline. You're allowed to have both windowed text and subheadings underneath a heading line. ThinkTank identifies outline headings that have associated windows by drawing a circle around the leading + or -.

After opening a text window, you enter an environment that's a mixture of MacWrite and ThinkTank. The window has the same "hot" frame scrolling as the main ThinkTank window, but the rest of the editor is closer to the familiar Macintosh standards. There are no fancy frills here. Everything is in the same monospaced font as the outline, and you can't set the margins or justify text. While those features would be nice, ThinkTank is, after all, an "idea processor". You can always format your text with your favorite word processor.

I found a few minor bugs in the editor. If you select a block of text that includes the last character in the window, and delete it,

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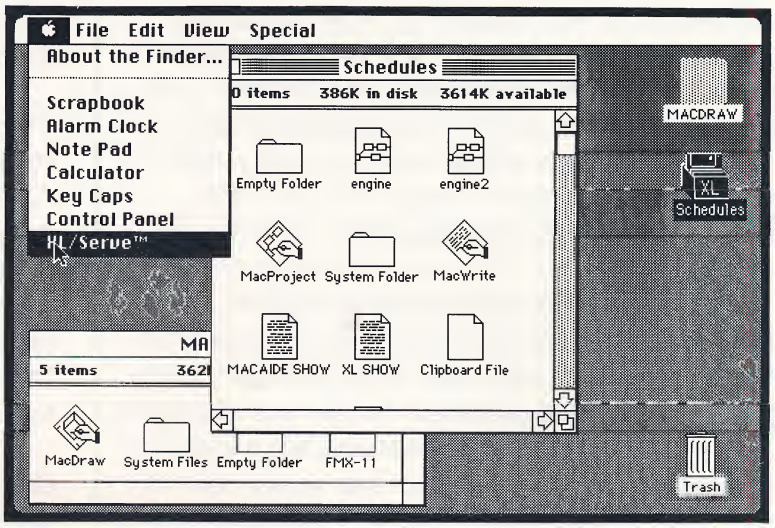

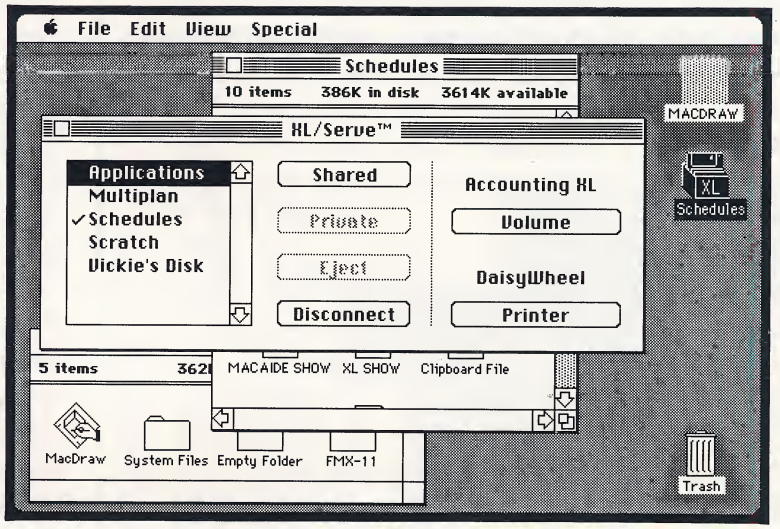

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the last character won't go away. An extra cursor appears when you press Return, but in a location that you immediately overwrite if you continue typing on the new line. And occasionally, after cutting text, the remaining text that shifts over to fill the cut disappears from the screen, leaving a block of white space. The text is still in the document, but invisible. While the editor never actually lost any of my text, it didn't make me feel 100% confident that my data was safe.

Picture windows are opened, closed, and identified in the outline in the same fashion as text windows. ThinkTank is limited in what it can do with pictures. It can cut or paste pictures to and from the scrapbook and clipboard, and display them on the screen or printer, but it has no features for editing them.

One disappointment is that windows may not contain both text *and* graphics. Being able to mix editable text and pictures would be very handy. To associate text with a picture in ThinkTank 512, you need to define two outline subheadings, one for the picture and one for the text.

Since ThinkTank isn't a word or picture processor, it needs the ability to move text and pictures to other programs where they can be edited. ThinkTank uses the clipboard as you'd expect, but also offers an interesting and novel technique for getting information to and from the scrapbook using three new items in the Edit menu: Cut to Scrapbook, Copy to Scrapbook, and Paste From Scrapbook. These functions work only on windows, not outline headings. The Cut and Copy functions are convenient if you're using ThinkTank to produce an outline interspersed with text and illustrations in windows. When it's time to ship everything to a word processor, one simple command strips the outline from the text and illustrations, and deposits them in the scrapbook.

Things are a bit tougher on the receiving end of such an operation. Each window becomes a separate page in the scrapbook, which can make the process of assembling text a bit tedious. "One window, one page" is a rule that's easy to explain and understand, but I would prefer a way to combine text windows for nearly all the things I would use ThinkTank for.

You can keep outline headings and text together by copying them to the clipboard, as I did in creating this article. You'll need to do a bit of cleanup, to get rid of the leading +'s and -'s, but it can be more convenient than pasting from the scrapbook. The technique doesn't work for pictures, though. Pictures won't come through when you paste text.

One change that will annoy some ThinkTank 128 users is that outlines copied to the clipboard and pasted into a word processor aren't indented the way they are with ThinkTank 128. Everything is flush with the left margin. That appears to be a compromise to save users the effort of un-indenting text windows and headings in the word processor, but many users will want things both ways. I'd like to see an item in the new Preferences menu to control indentation during copying.

Paste From Scrapbook is a menu item with a slightly misleading name. Paste The Scrapbook describes it better, since the entire scrapbook is brought into the outline, each page becoming a subheading and window under a newly-created heading. You can then cut and paste to get the desired windows where you want them. This can save a lot of time and mousing around if you are bringing several pictures or blocks of text into your outline.

The new Slide Show function, like the scrapbook operations, works only with text and picture windows. You can select a heading, then choose the Slide Show menu item, and ThinkTank will successively display all the windows underneath that heading. You are given the choice of moving to the next picture after either a mouse-click or a set amount of time, entered in 60ths of a second.

You also have the option of displaying the outline heading above the window as a caption.

Slide Show could be handy for reviewing text, for demonstrations at stores and conventions, or even actual slide shows (if you're willing to pay for a projection system). You'll have to keep your text windows down to fifteen lines or less to fit the screen, since Slide Show simply ignores the rest. When you're using the mouse to control the advance to the next frame, there's a box with a "Click to Continue" message at the bottom of the screen that will annoy some users and please others.

ThinkTank's printing function has been greatly expanded for the 512K version. Listings can be produced in a variety of styles, with options to include section numbers, to strip or retain the leading +'s and -'s in the outline, and to control the amount of indenting (or eliminate it entirely) for lower levels of the outline. Outline headings can be printed in bold, with an option to do so for only the top level of the outline, the top two levels, top three levels, and so on. You can also specify that, below a chosen level, headlines are not printed at all.

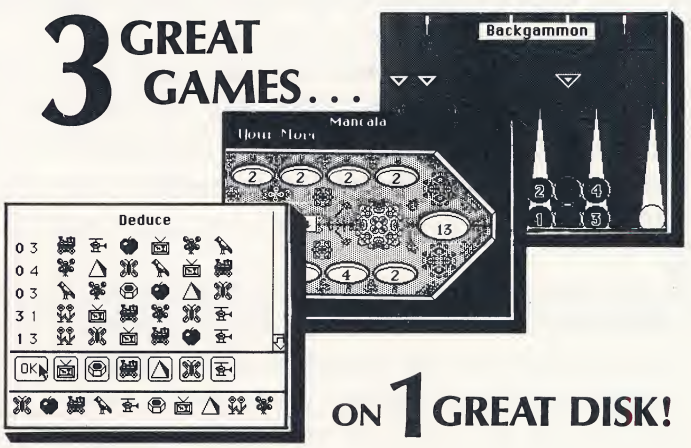
ThinkTank 512 allows a certain amount of control over the format of a printed page. You can specify the left and right margins of the page, but not the top and bottom. Text is automatically reformatted to fit within the margins. Headers, footers, or both can be added to each page in a fixed format, consisting of the day and date at the left edge, the page number at the right edge, and the text of the headline you selected for printing in the center.

Another option produces a table of contents. Like boldfacing, you select the depth to which headlines are indexed. If you select zero, no table of contents is produced.

Like the editor, printing is limited to a single font in a single size. You can choose either 9 or 12 point text, but the entire document must be the same size, with no justification or proportional spacing. But the boldfacing, section numbering, and indexing allow ThinkTank to go far beyond simply producing working copies of outlines. Many users will find that they prefer to produce proposals, specifications, and manuals directly in ThinkTank 512, without using a word processor at all.

The insertion point can now be moved around using the arrow keys on the numeric keypad, or by using the command key with one of the number keys on the keypad or main keyboard. As a long-time user of other computers, I applaud the notion of being able to keep my hands on the keyboard, but I found the new command key definitions a bit awkward. They just don't have the convenience of WordStar's s-e-d-x diamond (for left, up, right, down). Another new feature is that when the cursor is over a window's borders, it becomes an arrow that points in the direction that text will scroll when you click.

3 GREAT GAMES...



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ThinkTank 512 continues to use the same type of copy protection scheme as the 128K version. The master disk has a deliberate error that is checked when you run the program, so you can't copy it by conventional means.

The new ThinkTank, like the old one, allows you to run using a hard disk or external floppy, and requires inserting the master disk only during startup. ThinkTank 512 is a bit more tolerant about having the master disk inserted. If it's not present when you start the program, you're shown a message and given a chance to insert it. ThinkTank 128 simply returned to the Finder if the master disk wasn't ready when it went looking for it.

Any ThinkTank 128 document can be read and edited by ThinkTank 512, and ThinkTank 512 documents that contain only outlines can be read and changed by ThinkTank 128. Even documents produced by ThinkTank 512 that contain text and pictures can be read with ThinkTank 128, with the text changing into subheadings, line by line. ThinkTank 512 pictures also appear in ThinkTank 128, but as gibberish text rather than pictures. If you use ThinkTank 128 to edit and then save a ThinkTank 512 document containing text or pictures, the changes will ruin the pictures and permanently reformat the text into subheadings.

In addition to the text editor bugs already mentioned, I encountered two others. When I tried to paste to the scrapbook desk accessory, I found that the command-V key didn't work, even though the menu selection did. I also discovered that ThinkTank incorrectly reports that there is no space left on a hard disk if it hasn't opened a file on it. The space is reported correctly for floppies.

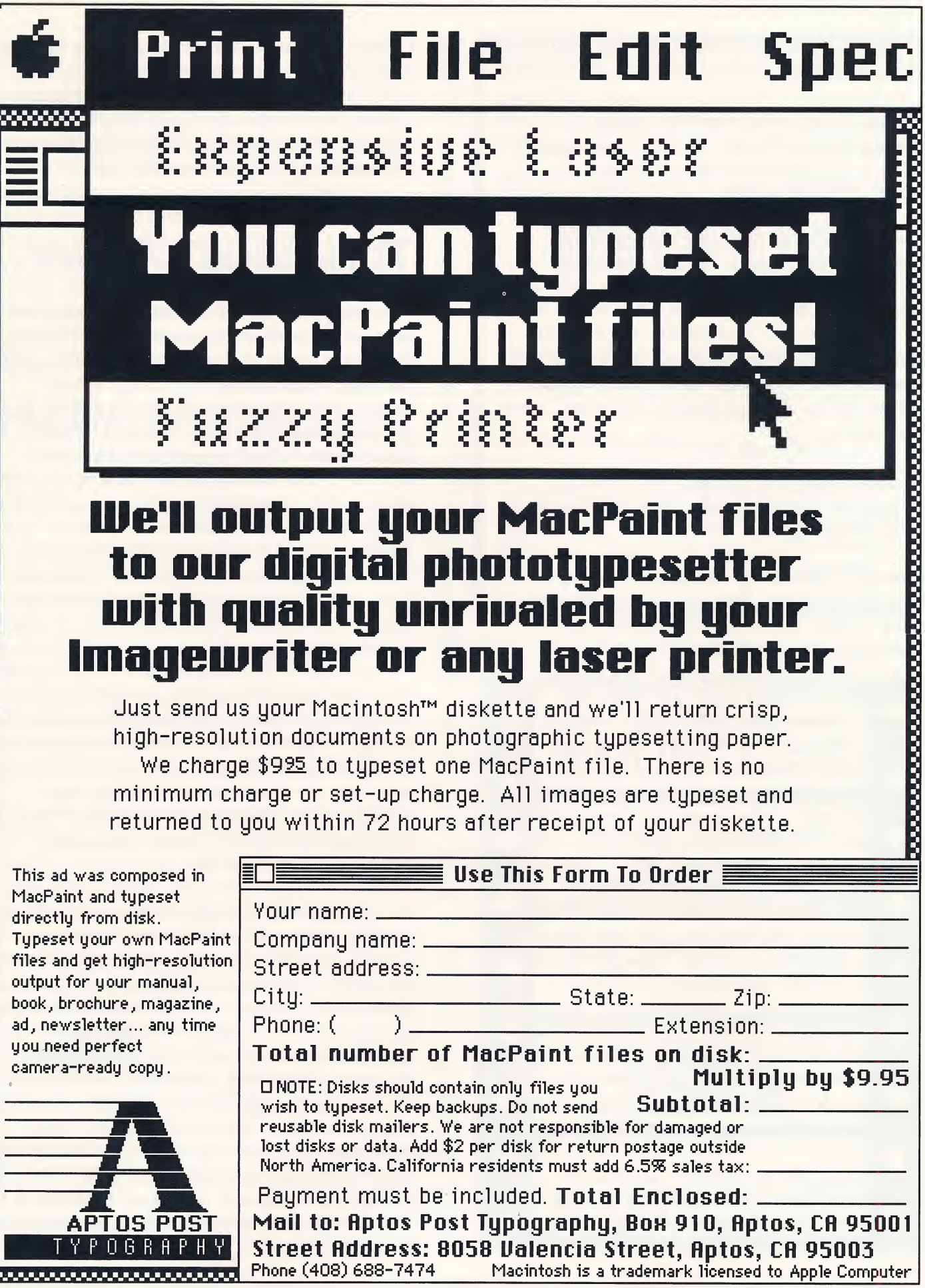
I called Living Videotext shortly before going to press, and asked them about the bugs and their plans for correcting them. They were quite frank about acknowledging the bugs, and said that they were working on an update to fix them. I was told that they expect to have the update ready in "about thirty days" and will provide it at no charge to all registered owners. They seemed genuinely interested in making sure they knew about all the bugs I found, and in discussing my reactions and suggestions concerning ThinkTank. Of course, I had identified myself as a product reviewer.

Should you spend the extra $100 for ThinkTank 512? The answer is, unequivocally, "it depends". If you're a satisfied user of ThinkTank 128, you may not be interested in the new features that the 512K version has to offer. If all you plan to do with ThinkTank is brainstorm or organize your thoughts on a general level, you should start with the smaller version. As long as your ideas can be expressed in short sentences, you can easily keep them in an outline. You can also easily upgrade later if you decide to do fancier things.

On the other hand, there are many uses for which the 512K version is clearly the better, or even the only, choice. As a writing tool, the fat version enables you to build your text right into the outline and, in some cases, produce the finished document. For another example, imagine planning or managing projects. The ability to add detailed notes about possible snags, to note important but obscure factors in decisions, or to include excuses for being late, can all be a real lifesaver. And, of course, there are the pictures. When you're in the conceptual stages of a project, a picture is often worth far more than a thousand words. If you've been debating about fattening your Mac, but couldn't quite decide to do it, ThinkTank 512 may be just the excuse you've been waiting for. ⊟

Received, But Not Yet Reviewed

Lisa/Macintosh Developer's List, a continuously updated directory of products organized by vertical market and by vendor, available printed and on disk. Century Next



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Dollars and Sense, Macintosh money management software. $149.95, Monogram, 8295 S. La Cienega Blvd., Inglewood, CA 90301, (213) 215-0529.

Game Disk One, featuring Backgammon, Mancala, and Deduce for the Macintosh. $39.50, Triple Play, Box 6354, Lafayette, IN 47903, (317) 742-5369.

DB Master for the Macintosh, data base management software. $195, Stoneware Inc., 50 Belvedere St., San Rafael, CA 94901, (415) 454-6500.

Images, MacPaint clip art. $45, Matrix Advocates Co., Box 1238, Brick, NJ 08723, (201) 899-4739.

Desktop Calendar, a calendar, notepad, appointment book, and tickler file for the Lisa. Videx Inc., 1105 NE Circle Blvd., Corvallis, OR 97330, (503) 758-0521.

MacNews Update #1 and *#2,* Macintosh product descriptions and reviews. $15/six issues, Michael A. Amarello, 110 Baldwin St., Fall River, MA 02720.

MacPublisher, a Macintosh text and picture composition system for publications. $99.95, Boston Software Publishers Inc., 19 Ledge Hill Rd., Boston, MA 02132, (617) 327-5775.

NewGammon, backgammon for the Macintosh. $39.95, NewSoft, Box 4035, Newport Beach, CA 92661, (714) 646-0948.

McTrivia, a question and answer trivia game, $40, and *McFlip,* a version of reversi, $34, both for the Macintosh. McCarron-Dial Systems, Box 45628, Dallas, TX 75245, (214) 247-5945.

The MACazine, a monthly magazine for Macintosh users. $24/year, Icon Concepts Corp., Box 1936, Athens, TX 75751, (214) 677-2793.

LabeLList, a Lisa 7/7 tool for printing mailing labels from LisaList files. $50, Consortium of Associated Schools and Educational Resources, University of Nebraska at Omaha, University Television Dept., 60th & Dodge St., Omaha, NE 68182-0310, (402) 554-2516.

This Issue's Cover

Not long after *Signal #20* hit the mail, Morris Herman called from Santa Barbara to tell us a local user group had supplied him with a desk accessory called New Key Caps, which displays the characters in any font, just as we had asked for in our response to that issue's letter about untypeable characters. He sent us a disk containing the desk accessory, along with a few other accessories we hadn't heard of. (For now, please don't contact *Signal* to ask for copies of these programs. Most user groups will be glad to supply you with such software for a nominal charge.) Three of those desk accessories can be seen on this issue's cover.

The disk that arrived also contained version 1.4 of CE Software's popular Desk Accessory Mover, which we first described in *Signal #15.* We were disappointed to find that the Mover still uses an intermediate "holding area" window, which seems so much more confusing than the Font Mover's simpler approach of working directly on files.

At first glance, New Key Caps seemed like exactly what we had asked for. When opened, it adds a KeyCaps menu to the menu bar, which allows any installed font to be selected for display on a keyboard that looks just like Mac's standard Key Caps desk accessory. On our cover, the keyboard is displaying Kingsbury characters, and the Frazier font is about to be selected from the menu. Unfortunately, we found that most fonts end up scaled too large for labeling the relatively small keyboard, causing the display to look garbaged and confusing. Worse yet, the system kept crashing after just a few font changes.

Two other desk accessories that arrived are the Phone Book and the Hex Calculator, also shown on our cover. Both are much more reliable than New Key Caps. The Phone Book stores names and addresses that can be searched with a Find command, along with a number that can be automatically dialed by a Mac. A scroll bar allows jumping to the first entry that starts with a given letter. A copyright notice identifies the Phone Book as a product of Scientific Enterprises, but does not include an address. Like New Key Caps, the Hex Calculator had no by-line.

This Month's Mailbag

Where Is Signal Headed?

What direction is *Signal* taking in the coming months? Seems to me that it'll be more and more difficult to be "The publication for Lisa and Macintosh *users and developers.*" The real mass of Mac users surely won't want the depth of info that developers need. A neophyte hacker or developer might ask "explain what resources are and how they're created and changed", while a user would want to know things like "what database program should I buy?"

L. Mawby, Suttons Bay, MI

Now that Apple has made it clear they won't be using the word "Lisa" much anymore, we've changed our cover and are not planning to instigate any further Lisa coverage, though we expect to continue to receive letters from Lisa users and maybe even a Lisa product or two, since over 25% of our subscribers claim to use a Lisa, either exclusively or in addition to a Macintosh. To us, "developers" has always meant anyone (including dealers) with an interest in seeing Apple's 32-bit products develop into a success, not just programmers looking for technical information. -MG

Encyclopedia Author Meets MacPaint Author

MacPaint author Bill Atkinson visited the Mac users group in Chapel Hill recently and I was able to ask him some questions, the answers to which cleared up some of the

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misunderstandings published in my *Encyclopedia Of Mac Faults* in *Signal #18.*

While I would rank MacPaint somewhere near CP/M or Visicalc in terms of being a microcomputer landmark, Bill doesn't seem to feel that way. He regards his creation more as a toy or bauble, useful for what he calls "daily art". As such, he considers it finished. At the time of his Chapel Hill visit, he was much more interested in working on the Apple video digitizer than in adding bells and whistles to MacPaint. In considering improving a program, Bill asks whether or not the code is "free". That is, whether or not he can implement the changes by making further calls to existing modules. If he has to write additional algorithms, then the improvement has a penalty, one which he is not interested in paying on MacPaint.

In the *Encyclopedia,* I observed that the actual dot printed by MacPaint was wider that a dot in a graphic printed by MacWrite, and thought it was two dots. Actually, according to Atkinson, a "dwell" command can be sent to the printer which lengthens the amount of time the printing pin impacts the paper, hence changing the aspect ratio of the printed image. He implied there was no other way to change the aspect ratio, which is too bad, because a lot of my Macintosh stuff goes to a copier, and the skinny dots from a MacWrite image come out looking better.

My article had also said it would be nice to be able to click the grabber on some connected collection of black pixels and drag them, without having to select them first with either the lasso or the rectangle. I did not think the software task would be too great. After all, the paint bucket already has that type of capability, since it will fill all of a connected white or black area with paint (with the exception of pixels on a diagonal), so it must "know" the bounds of that area. Bill maintained, however, that the task would be enormously complex, because the lasso tightens down on an object, rather than feeling around for all its branches, and he felt it would be far too slow. There are some topological wrinkles to this thing he understands and I don't.

Another feature I think would be a marvelous improvement to MacPaint would be automatic selection of drawn shapes, and I think the software would be "free" or nearly so. When you draw an object in not quite the right position, you need to erase or hit Undo and then redraw it. But imagine if drawing an object also then automatically selected the object (with what Bill calls "marching ants"). After letting up the mouse button when done drawing, you could either move the object to its correct location (by clicking on it and dragging), or deselect it as is and draw something else (by clicking elsewhere, which is what you usually do anyway).

Another improvement I would like to see is in the curve drawing routine. Try this: draw a circle in MacPaint, use FatBits to find every three pixels that form a right angle corner, and delete the corner pixel to leave just the two diagonal bits. See if you don't agree with me that circles look and print smoother with those corner bits removed. I do that manually on most of the circles I draw. It's a pain and I wish the computer did it for me.

I really appreciate the heartwarming responses to the *Encyclopedia* (a title chosen by *Signal,* not by me). Now, just to show I can be fair, I will criticize the frontrunner: Although the IBM PC weighs enough, it is simply too smooth to anchor a boat. Although it makes plenty of noise, the frequency is not right for driving off household pests. And although it has many chips, it still runs too cool to fry a good omelet.

Alex Funk, Durham, NC

Even if we had to trade away a number of existing features, we'd like to see a version of MacPaint with the display designed more closely to the "Mac standard", with movable, sizable windows, pattern and line selections in menus, and so on. We wonder by what order of magnitude the Mac would have to speed up to let the grabber operate acceptably fast in the manner you describe. One possible way to overcome the fixed aspect ratio is to write a program to directly read MacPaint files (the format is documented in Inside Macintosh*) and print them with the effects you want. -MG*

Signal Gets A Thumbs Down

Please! A little less complaining and much more positive feedback would improve your magazine 200%! If you're reviewing a real dog, perhaps some complaining is warranted, but not everything you write about!

Steven Stanley, Minneapolis, MN

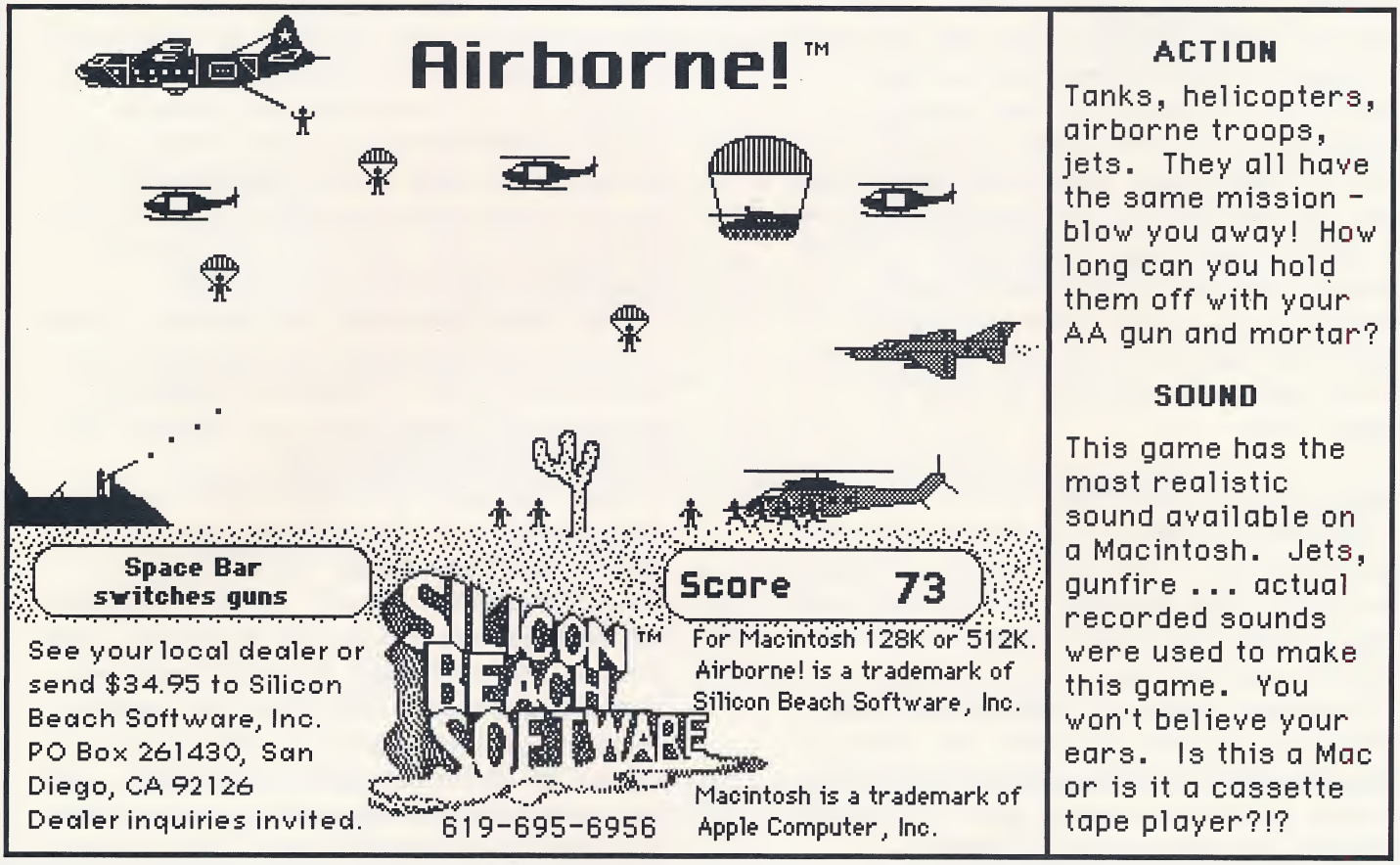
Since starting our "gladiator" system, nine products reviewed by Signal *(not by a by-lined author) have received a Thumbs Up, and two have received a Thumbs Down, though all the products had problems of one type or another that we felt were important enough to warn our readers about. This Mailbag column also often includes a lot of complaining, but that's because people tend to write us only if there's something to complain about, as your letter demonstrates. -MG*

Explaining Those Icon Surprises

The icon on your desktop is not directly connected to the file you moved in, as implied in your Microsoft BASIC story in *Signal #20*. To get the correct icon, you have to delete the invisible DeskTop file (using the MacTools program you thought there was so little use for in that same issue), so that the Finder will rebuild it from the icons in the applications' resources. You might be surprised to discover how much space is taken up in the DeskTop file for old icons that are never used any more.

Tom Pittman, San Jose, CA

Microsoft sent us another copy of 2.0, this time with the disk shutter seal intact. Wouldn't you know it? We haven't been able to reproduce our original success in forcing the appearance of an old icon. Why one of our disk's DeskTop files had the 1.0 icon is a mystery to us, since we never used 1.0 at all. One of the public domain disks we acquired must have been the carrier. We tried deleting a 9K DeskTop file on one disk using MacTools, and noticed the Finder recreated it in only 3K. The problem with missing icon pixels we reported still remains. -MG



Suggested: Suggested List Prices

To save some writing, include the suggested list price in your *Received But Not Yet Reviewed* column.

G. L. Berendes Jr., Pointe Claire, Canada

We'll do that, if it's supplied by the vendor or otherwise easily determined. (We never got into the habit because most products seem to arrive here without their vital statistics!) We've also added phone numbers, and made the same additions in the club listings. -MG

Embrace? We Don't Even Shake Hands

I hope you find it as easy to embrace the Macintosh XL as you have the Lisa. I also hope that Apple will provide 7/7-like software for the Mac.

Steve Mullen, Sidney, MT

As some of our earlier issues have hinted, we've never really warmed up to Lisa under MacWorks, now known as the XL. The aspect ratio problem has always been distasteful, and we don't like the way the ports, especially sound, fail to match up to the Mac. Most important, we keep hearing from XL users who have been burned by bugs that only seem to appear in Mac products when using MacWorks. MacWorks has been slowly improving, but we can't help continuing to think of the XL as a kluge. As for 7/7 on a Mac, the forthcoming Jazz product seems to be Apple's great hope in that arena. With or without Jazz, we would probably have abandoned Lisa in our office ages ago, if Apple had supplied a Mac hard disk (but not on the AppleTalk net!) with a Finder to match. -MG

Falling In Love With Mac

Via amateur radio, a busy home workbench, and a small lab in my own business, I updated my vacuum tube education to transistors and then IC logic, developed a line of industrial controls, and did well.

For several years, my question along with most of the country was "what do I need a computer for?" I have balanced checkbooks, written letters and reports, done engineering sketches, put out mailings, compiled directories, maintained files, and cranked through calculations for half a lifetime without a computer. I can turn on the lights and a coffee pot at 6:30 AM with a $3.99 timer. Few games hold much attraction.

A six-night course in BASIC at the local high school illustrated how I might do a payroll, but my business (auto positioners, controls, packaging machines, consulting) was dying at that point. After the '81 recession killed a good little business of thirty-three years, I took refuge in a large corporation.

I am now a project engineer in the submarine missile launching business. My new employer offered a $3600, two-year, interest-free computer loan. Interested but cautious, I drove to a computer fair to look at Kaypro II, a loaded Commodore 64, an IBM, and to stumble unexpectedly onto Macintosh.

The young man selling Kaypro knew his stuff, but with my myopic eyesight the display was too close for glasses and blurrily beyond bare eyes. Did this mean I could never coexist with a computer? The Commodores were being devoured by the small fry playing games. Some new color graphics machines from Boston were wowzers. IBM was there, stark and gray as I had known them in business, impressive but never welcome in my home with their always slightly condescending manner. Over in the corner was a small knot of people crowded around a man and a computer. When I could finally get a look, I found it was the new Macintosh. That was mid-April 1984.

The mouse glided over the desktop, and the mystical icons exploded into documents and graphics and tools. I watched through the demonstration, asked price and delivery, and literally ran out of the hall.

After the five miles home, I burst into the house, went to the sewing room and said, "Put down what you're doing. Come with me. I have glimpsed the future!" Shirley hesitated, but realized this was no normal request. When she saw Mac and began to realize what was happening, she said, "You need that machine. What are you waiting for?" Me? With a computer? I am not going to compute. I am not going to write programs. I am not going to control the household lights with it. But it

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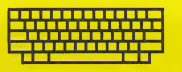

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could do word processing, and the graphics were intriguing. With my company's offer of no-interest financing, my defenses were fading.

Over this past summer, Mac produced a fifty-three page tech manual for me to accompany a digital instrument I did for the Navy. The text is beautiful. The tabulations, charts, logic diagrams, and panel views are great. The typing pool no longer puts higher priority work in front of mine nor mangles tech terms. The draftsmen don't hold up the job for weeks and weeks. My work was delivered ahead of time, and my Navy manager was so pleased that he handed over $300,000 worth of contracts to continue research. Much credit for that is due Mac.

This week's work was drafting a refurbished laboratory with enough architectural detail for both corporate planning and purchasing. Some weeks have gone into a large circuit board. Run through the copier, the graphics are then dense enough for photography and to make a preliminary board to test elaborate circuitry. This breaks the problem of someone else putting mistakes into "my" artwork. Samples of my work have gone up the corporate ladder. The group is buying eight Fat Macs for in-office use, even though the division seems to be hung up on the DEC Rainbow, though that preference seems to have stalled. I hope I know where the doubt originates.

Last week, the 512K expansion was installed, and the machine is greater than ever. Mac has done great things for my career with this company, and I consider him my second best friend, after a big black Labrador. When there is a disk which teaches Mac to shag a Frisbee, even that may change.

Ned Raub, Waterford, CT

7,012 Down, A Few Hundred Thousand To Go

I'm puzzled why your *Signal #20* circulation was only 7,012, given all the Macs that Apple has sold.

James A. Tolbert, Albany, OR

We haven't yet convinced Apple to include a free subscription coupon for Signal *with each Mac shipped. -MG*

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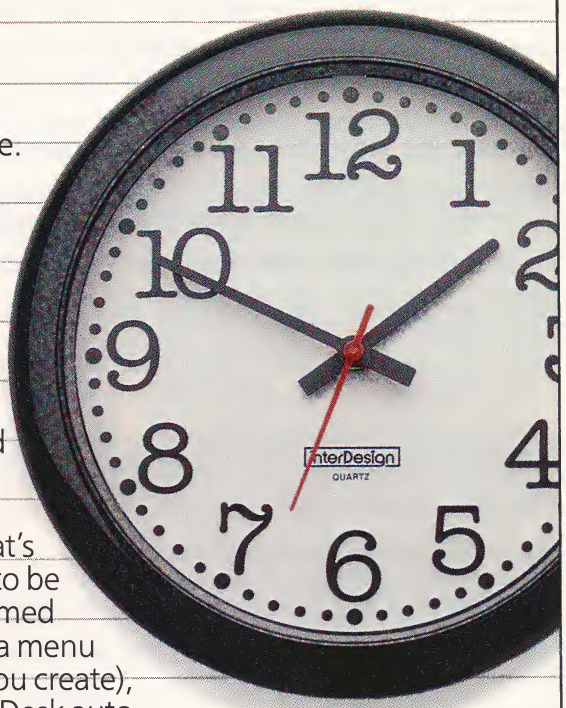

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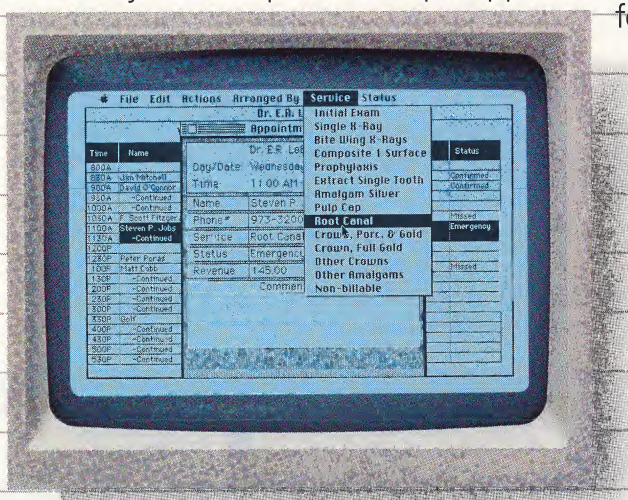

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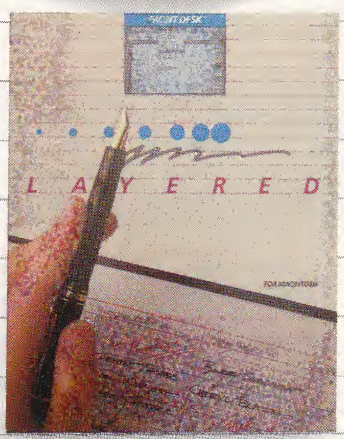

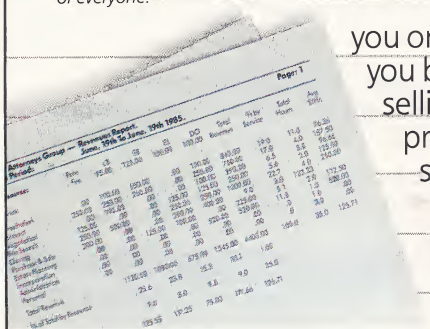

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